



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## A TYPE OF SCANDINAVIAN WORD FORMATION

The Scandinavian dialects are enriched by certain large classes of words which exhibit two peculiarities. The words in these classes seem, in the first place, to be pregnantly laden with meaning. While there appears to be no deeper reason why in Swedish *vatten* (or in English *water*) should mean what it means and we are content to see the word divided into root and suffix and these divisions compared with words in other Indo-European languages, such expressions as Swedish (dialectic) *skvabba* 'skälfva af fetma, vara fet så att hullet dallrar då man går' or *hvimsa* 'bära sig oredigt åt, vara yr' with the adjective *hvimsen* 'yr i hufvudet' seem in more than an accidental way to convey their idea. Such, at least, is the feeling of the speakers,—a factor which, as modern study has come to realize, is by no means negligible. Until quite recently linguists did neglect this feature and attempted to apply to such words the methods suitable to old Indo-European vocables. They tried to split off suffixes and prefixes, analyzed the galvanic double consonants into the cold metal of assimilations, and kept the vowels neatly classed in ablaut rows. All this was hard work,—which brings us to the second peculiarity of these words: they lack cognates in other languages and are, in general, etymologically obscure. It was hard work and, if such matters interested wider circles of people, would have been very unpopular for its neglect of the homely value of these expressions to the speakers' heart.

This value, as I have mentioned, is coming to be more and more appreciated by students. Von Friesen's attempt in his study *Om de germanska mediageminatorna*. (Upsala Universitets Årsskrift, 1897) to explain the Germanic words (mostly Scandinavian) with *-bb-*, *-dd-*, *-gg-*<sup>1</sup> as uniformly due to an old *n*-assimilation has been opposed by Elof Hellquist (*Några anmärkningar om de nordiska verben med mediageminata*, Göteborg Högskolas Årsskrift, 1908, according to Neckel, *AfdA.* 35, 83), whose own earlier attempt at explaining a great number of Scandinavian words by means of *k-*, *l-*, *r-*, *s-*, and *t-* suffixes<sup>2</sup> (*AfnF.* 14, 1 ff., 136 ff.) was methodically parallel to von Friesen's essay. Hellquist and with him such

<sup>1</sup>Such as *skvabba*, above.

<sup>2</sup>S-suffix e. g. in *hvimsa*, above.

men as Braune (in the third edition of his *Althochdeutsche Grammatik*) and Falk (*Om indskud af j med forsterkende og navnlig nedsættende betydning i norske ord* in *Sproglig-historiske Studier* tilegnede Professor C. R. Unger, Kristiania 1898) now explain the form of such word-classes as due to onomatopoeia or semi-onomatopoetic formation, to symbolic consonant-doubling in intensives, and the like. They suppose that the sound-combinations in these words are intimately suited to the meaning intended and were (so we must understand) produced or at any rate moulded by the meaning. In some way, they would tell us, the sound-complex *skvabba* is eminently suited to the idea of something or someone so fat as to "bibber" and shake like a jelly, or to the appearance of a very obese woman (*skvabba*, noun, fem.); and *hvimsa*, they might say, with its *hvi-* of a whistling whip and its clumsy *-ms-* owes its existence to its fitness for the meaning of running crazily about ("like a chicken with its head cut off").

Undoubtedly this is an advance. The first step toward explaining these words must be to get as near as possible to the value they have for those who use them. I hope I shall not be considered reactionary if I believe that the pendulum has swung too far, that equilibrium, which is truth, lies between. If the sound-combinations in question were inherently significant of the meanings they bear in Scandinavian and capable of being called into existence by these meanings, we should expect to hear them in all parts of the world and to see them in the records of all ages. As we find scarcely any of these words in other languages except only the closely related West Germanic dialects (English, Dutch, and German) and as the oldest records of Scandinavian and West Germanic speech show but few examples, we must conclude that beside the philosophic and esthetic explanation we need a historic one. This is not the place to try to give such with full proof; a rough outline and a few familiar examples may, however, be of more general interest.

The great psychologic factor in language is analogy, which leads a child, for instance, on the model of *sing*: *sang* to say "*brang*" for the preterite of *bring*.<sup>1</sup> Now, given a few

<sup>1</sup>Tradition, in the shape of older people who say *brought*, here corrects the child, but the analogic tendency is often more powerful than tradition; it has been so, for instance, in the plural of *book*, which is now formed on the analogy of most English nouns, though it used to be like that of *foot*.

words in *skv-* with such meanings as Sw. *squalpa* 'to rise in waves and splash up water; to bring into splashing motion,' it is perfectly natural that tradition should come to be violated and the word *skvabba* 'to shake with obesity' (or however you would English it) spoken on the model of such words in *-abba* as Sw. d. *dabba* 'to dirty or botch,' noun fem. 'a slovenly woman', *stabba* 'to walk with difficulty, especially in snow or dirt', and *kvabba* 'to shake a little, tremble when shaken (e. g. of soft ground).' Nor is it strange that the same analogy should have occurred when people wanted to express the idea of walking with water in one's shoes: *skvabba* 'hafva vatten i skorna, så att det ger ett plaskande ljud när man går,' Rietz, *Svenskt Dialect-Lexikon*, p. 610. The four words (in reality there were probably more) cited as having furnished the analogy for *skvabba* are all known to be extremely old. Sw. *squalpa*, found also in Lithuanian (*skalbiù* 'to wash by whacking with a board'), is of Into-European age, and the dialect words *dabba*, *stabba* correspond, respectively, to Sanskrit *dabhnoti* 'hurts, injures, cheats' and *stabhnāti* 'props, supports, is stiff or lame', while *kvabba* is itself a very old analogic reformation of a word corresponding to Church Slavic *žaba* 'a frog'. The word *skvabba* was created at an early time, for it is common in related meanings to all the Germanic languages: E. *swab*, Low German *swabbeln*, G. *schwappeln*. Sw. d. *hvimsa* occurs only in Scandinavian (E. *whimsey* is a loan-word according to Falk-Torp. *Dänisch-Norwegisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, p. 1380) and is therefore probably a much more recent formation than *skvabba*. The principle, however, is the same: tradition offered on the one hand such words as Old Norse *hvima* 'to be confused and tardy' (in Norwegian dialects *kvima* 'to run about busily and aimlessly') and on the other hand such words as Sw. d. *flamsa* 'to rush ahead noisily' and *klumsen* adj. 'stiff with cold' (E. *clumsy* from the Scandinavian, see Falk-Torp, op. cit., p. 538).

In this way the Germanic languages formed whole groups of rime-words. If we had complete records we could observe these being formed one after the other: as it is we must be content, in most cases, to determine which words date from an earlier stratum of language and which are analogic formations. In this way the following group of rime-words may be explained. Not fully, of course—for all analogies are not obvious, and many are too subtle for the crude means at our

disposal, especially those acting on the vowels, where tradition itself has come to allow certain substitutions (*Modern Philology* 7, 245 ff.) Thus in the common case of parallel forms with the vowels *a*, *i*, and *u*, it is in some cases impossible to tell which form is oldest, which due to analogy.

1. a. Sw. dial. *flattår* 'to giggle, snicker'.
- b. Sw. dial. *flittår*, in the same meaning.

The signification of these words is due to the rime-words,—just as is their form. They were formed from such words as Sw. d. *flissa*, *flira* 'to giggle', which owe their origin to Sw. *flina* 'grin, laugh with open mouth' (cf. Dan. *flæbe*, G. *flennen* 'to weep'). We can thus follow step by step, until we come to words meaning 'to stretch' or 'to spread', e. g. E. *flat*, gr. *πλατύς* 'flat', Lithuanian *plýnas* 'bare, bald, treeless.' Each derived word owes its form and meaning partly to rime-words, retaining only the old initial. G. *flattern*, and E. *flitter*, G. *flitter* are from the same source, but mean 'to wave, flap, wag' and 'to glitter, flimmer', meanings which also will be found in the rime-words. Note also E. *flutter*.

2. Sw. d. *fnittra* 'to laugh, snicker'.

Parallel in form and meaning with 1.b. above. I cannot say which was formed first: whichever it was became a factor in producing the other. *fnittra*, like *fnissa*, in the same meaning (cf. *flissa* under 1), was formed after rime-words from Sw. *fnysa* 'to puff, pant, wheeze', which is also found in Old Norse, and is related to gr. *πνέω* 'to blow or breathe'.

3. Sw. *glittra* 'to glitter, glimmer, flimmer'.

This word, common to all the Germanic languages, dates from a time when derivation by means of *r*-suffixes was a vital and usual process. It was so derived from a word *glita* 'to shine', preserved in Old Norse, which is of Indo-European age: cf. gr. *χλιδών* 'ornamentation, finery', *χλιδῆ* 'luxury'. As we can thus account for *glittra* without supposing the existence of rime-word models, it may have been one of the original members of its group.

- 4.a. Sw. d. *gnattår* 'småskratta, fnittra, under lek och skämt skratta'.

In Old Norse *gnotra* means 'to complain', in English *gnatter* and in Low German *gnattern* mean 'to grumble, murmur, cry'. In Swedish the rime-words (e. g. 1, a) have influenced the meaning. The basis on which the word was formed is an old set of words denoting 'rubbing' and 'grating',

e. g. Sw. *gnida*, O. E. *gnidan* and gr. *χνίσι* 'it is drizzling' and *χνισμός* 'a scratching'.

b. Sw. d. *gnittår*, *gnitra*=*gnattår*.

Low German *gnittern* has the same meaning as *gnattern*: in such word-pairs the one with *i*-vowel denotes a finer, higher sound; for a dull, obscure grumbling the Low German has also *gnuttern*.

5. Sw. *huttra* 'to shake with cold or fever, chatter with the teeth'.

In the same meaning the word is found in the other Scandinavian languages and in Flemish and German. It is a formation into our group from an older set of words which includes Dutch *hotten* 'to swing' and Lith. *kutėti* 'to shake up', perhaps also Latin *quatio*.

6. Sw. *kuttra* 'to coo', in the dialects also 'to talk fast and low, to prattle, rattle, cackle'.

This word is due to a set of words in *k*- used of vocal noises; most widespread in Germanic is Sw. *kackla*, E. *cackle*, cf. in Latin *gannio* 'to bark', *garrio* 'to prattle'; close to *cackle* in form are Church Slavic *gagnati* 'to murmur', Polish *gęgać* 'to cackle', and gr. *γαργαρεύω* 'to mock', *γογγύζω* 'to murmur' (cf. O. E. *cancettan* 'to mock').

It is significant that *kuttra* is also used as a synonym of *huttra*.

7. Sw. *knattra* 'to rattle, crackle', in the dialects used, according to Rietz, op. cit., p 335, in the senses 'braka; knarra, om snöns gnäll; då man går eller åker på starkt frusen snö; knastra, äta ben eller något torrt'.

This word is found in German also, with a parallel form *knittern*. It is derived from a large group of words in *kn*-, all of similar meaning, e. g. Sw. *knacka*, *knalla*, *knäpra*, *knarra*. A more original form and meaning is preserved in Sw. *knåda*, E. *knead* (O. E. *cnedan*), which corresponds to Church Slavic *gnetq* 'to crush or knead'. Owing to an original similarity of form and meaning between the words in *kn*- and those in *gn*- (see 4), analogic doublets were formed in Germanic until today the two initials run perfectly parallel, as e. g. in Sw. *knall*=Sw. d. *gnall*.

8. Sw. *kvittra* (*qvittra*) 'to twitter'.

This word, occurring in all the Scandinavian languages, is formed from a set of words meaning originally 'to speak, say': the various steps appear in Old Norse *kvitta* 'to narrate', and

Dutch *kweelen* 'to pipe, sing, twitter' from Middle Low German *quedelen* 'to chat', and (this is the oldest member of the group) Sw. *qvāda* 'to sing', Old Norse *kveda* 'to say, recite', found in all the oldest German records as the usual word where today we use the word *say* (Du. *zeggen*, G. *sagen*, Dan. *sige*, Sw. *sāga*), *qvāda* has cognates in Old Irish *bēl* 'lip, mouth' and probably Latin *arbiter*. See Falk-Torp, op. cit., under *kvidre* and *kvæde*.

9. a. Sw. d. *mottra* 'to boil slowly'.
- b. Sw. d. *mutra* 'to murmur' (quoted by Falk-Torp, s. v. *mut*).

The latter word, which exists also in Norwegian dialects and in the English *mutter*, is the older of the two. It is the representative in our group of the widespread family of words beginning in *mu-*, e. g. Norwegian dialectic *mutta* 'to pout' and Latin *muttire* 'to whimper', also Sw. *mumla*, *mucka*, *mule*, and gr. *μούζω* 'to groan, snort', Lat. *mugio* 'to roar', Sanskrit *muñjati* 'he gives a sound', gr. *μούλλω* 'to pout, grunt, eat like a cow or an old man'. *mottra* is formed and used like *pottra*, in the next number.

10. a. Old Swedish and modern Sw. d. *patra* 'to prattle'.
- English *patter* is used partly in the same meaning, also Middle Low German *pateren*. The Old Norse noun *pati* 'prattle' has a close cognate in the Greek *πάζω* 'to prattle'.

- b. Sw. d. *pittra* 'to write close and small'.

Norwegian dialectic *pitra* 'to spurt out in a thin stream but under high pressure' was formed independently of the Swedish word. Both are derived from the group of words in *p-* denoting a pushing, poking, usually of a thin object, e. g. Sw. *peta* ('to pick, as the teeth'), *picka*, *pika*, etc. A cognate is Sanskrit *bunda-* 'arrow', to which correspond, in form, English *punt* and Sw. d. *putta* 'to beat, push, shove', E. *put*.

- c. Sw. d. *pottra* 'to boil, purl'.

- d. Sw. d. *puttra* 'to boil, purl, grumble, quarrel'.

Unlike E. *potter* and *putter*, which belong to the group mentioned under b. the Sw. words belong to the group of E. *purl* and Gr. *βουζών* 'thick-packed, close-packed' and Sanskrit *budbuda-* 'water-bubble', which, literally, would be in Germanic "*put-put*" or "*pot-pot*". Falk-Torp under *potre* give up our words as onomatopoeic, cf. the introductory remarks of this paper.

11. Sw. d. *plattra* 'to shoot many weak shots'.

The noun *platter* is used of the rattling of a volley of weak shots. Sw. *pladdra* 'to chatter, prattle' is according to Falk-Torp a loan-word from the Middle Low German *pladeren*, which corresponds exactly to Latin *blatero*, in the same meaning.

12. Sw. d. *sattra sej* 'to settle down, grow restful, become quiet'.

Rietz himself, s. v., gives what is no doubt the right explanation of this word; it is derived from *sitta*, the general Germanic and Indo-European word for 'sit'.

13. Sw. d. *sjatträ* 'to rattle, cackle'.

The initial combination *sja-* came into Scandinavian through the "breaking" of an older *se-*, so in the dialects *sjalver* for *själf*; *sj* in general came also from the old diphthong *eu* after *s*; as in *sjuk*, Gothic *suks*. Contrary to Falk in his above mentioned essay on "*Indskud af j*", I believe that this and similar initial combinations arose only in the way described. Where, as in *sjatträ*, no corresponding older form with *e* or *eu* is found, we have an analogic formation. The Sw. and Norw. dialects contain a considerable number of such analogic *sj*-words, e. g. Sw. d. *sjabba* 'to be slow, dawdle', *sjäffsa* id., *sjajma* 'to talk nonsense', *sjasa* 'to scrape with the feet', and so on. In some cases these words have entered into parallelism with words in *skj-*, as *sjaffsa* 'silly, shiftless woman': *skjaffsa* 'old slipper or worn-down shoe'. Which of the original *sj*-words gave the starting-point for these formations, I cannot say.

14. a. Sw. *sqvattra* 'to waste time with prattling; to quack, twitter, prattle, laugh'.

The *skv-* group to which this word (but not the *skvabba* discussed earlier in this paper) belongs, has the meaning of 'to cry out, yell' in various modifications as in Sw. *sqvåka* (E. *squeak*). An old member of the group is Sw. d. *skvala* 'to stream or rush noisily; to rattle, prattle' in Old Norse 'to talk loud, call out', cf. Church Slavic *skoliti* 'to bark'.

b. Sw. d. *skvittär* 'to splash about, to poke about to all sides'.

This word belongs to the *squirt-* group, with Sw. d. *skvabba* and Sw. *squalpa* above discussed. The *-tt-* formations of this family may be illustrated by Sw. d. *skvättä* 'to squander', Scotch *squatter* (Scandinavian loan or derived from such) 'to squirt; to squander', English *swatter* 'to squirt,



splash', and the strong verb Sw. d. *skvitta skvatt* 'to splash'. Norw. d. *skvitra* 'to twitter' belongs to Sw. *sqvattra* under a.

15. Sw. d. *smittår* 'to break into small pieces, smash'.

The oldest Germanic word of this group is probably the word Sw. *smita*, E. *smite*, G. *schmeiszen*. In Greek we find *σμίλη* 'chisel, knife'.

16. Sw. *snatträ* 'to cackle'.

This, according to Falk-Torp, is a loan-word from the Middle Low German *snateren*; in Norw. d. *snatra* 'to snort, hiss, crackle' these scholars see a true cognate of the German word (s. v. *snadder*). The word belongs, in any case, to a number of other *sn-* words denoting 'snapping' and 'cackling', e. g. G. *schnappen* (Sw. *snappa*), *Schnabel* (Sw. *snabel*), *schnaken* (Sw. *snacka*), cf. Lith. *snapas* 'beak'.

17. Sw. d. *stuträ* 'to stutter, stammer'.

Although this word is found in all the Germanic languages, there is a possibility of loans. Wherever it was first formed, it has all the characteristics of an old *r-* derivative (iterative-diminutive in sense) from Sw. *stota*, G. *stoszen*; Middle English *stoten*, cf. Lat. *tundo*.

18. Sw. d. *svatträ* 'to cackle like a goose'.

The same formation exists in Low German in the sense of 'to prattle, babble'. The oldest words of the group are Sw. *svara*, *svärja*, E. *answer*, *swear*, cf. Sanskrit *sváratī* 'he sounds'.

19. a. Sw. d. *tattår* 'to talk Gypsy talk; to talk unintelligibly or 'nonsensically'.

The definition is Rietz's and shows his derivation,—from *tattare* 'Gypsy', cf. E. *Tartar*. Middle Low German, Dutch, and Middle English have, however, *tateren* 'to prattle', and E. *tattle* is found also in Middle Low German and in Norwegian dialects. These are derivations,—it is possible, even old derivations,—of the well-known words Sw. *tala*, G. *zählen*, *erzählen*; E. *tell*. The origin of this group is obscure; most generally accepted is Fick's connection with Lat. *dolus* 'trick, subterfuge', see Falk-Torp, who adopt this explanation under *tal*.

b. Sw. d. *tittra* 'to snicker, laugh through the teeth'.

In the Norwegian dialects this word means 'to shake with laughter' and in English *titter* has the connotation and sometimes the sense of 'to tremble, to quake'. The latter meaning alone belongs to Old Norse *titra* and Old High German *zittarōn*, G. *zittern*, and is doubtless the original one, the mean-

ing 'snicker' being due to rime-words (cf. 1, 2, 4 above). The word is of Indo-European age: it corresponds exactly to Gr. *διδράσκω*, which has the *-skō* ending from *βάσκω*.

c. Sw. d. *tuttra* 'to snicker, titter'.

With the *u*-vowel denoting a duller, lower sound, this word belongs to *tittra*, under b.

20. Sw. d. *tjatträ* 'to talk fast and low; to prattle, rattle, cackle', also *tjättra*.

As the word occurs in Norwegian and Danish also, it may represent an old Scandinavian *\*tetra*, for which compare the preceding number and Middle High German *zēter*, *setter* 'Hilf-, Klage-und Erstaunensruf', G. *zestern*.

LEONARD BLOOMFIELD.

The University of Illinois.